

Oleksandr Usyk's remarkable journey to 'Ring of Fire': Assessing the road to undisputed heavyweight glory



Oleksandr Usyk's ascent to the pinnacle of the heavyweight division has been nothing short of spectacular, culminating in a blockbuster undisputed heavyweight showdown against Tyson Fury – aptly named 'Ring of Fire'.

Set to take place in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, on February 17, this clash is much more than a regular bout – it's a chance for Usyk to etch his name in boxing history by adding the WBC belt to his existing collection of WBA, IBF, WBO, IBO, and The Ring titles and become the undisputed heavyweight champion.

Suppose the Ukrainian is to achieve that incredible feat in

the Middle East. In that case, he will have to prevail on his underdog status as he is less favoured than 'The Gypsy King' in the [Tyson Fury vs Oleksandr Usyk betting odds](#).

Usyk has already showcased his ability in the Blue Riband weight class, and it would be no real upset should he beat Fury in Saudi Arabia despite what the bookmakers think. That said, let's look at his climb to the top of the division.

The transition to heavyweight

After delivering a devastating knockout to Tony Bellew in November 2018 to retain his undisputed status in the cruiserweight division, Usyk faced a pivotal decision.

Opting to vacate his cruiserweight belts, he made the audacious move to heavyweight – a division where many doubted his physical capabilities.

However, Usyk has defied expectations – showcasing his skill, intelligence, and adaptability in each bout.

Astronomical rise in the rankings

The Ukrainian's heavyweight journey began in October 2019 when he faced Chazz Witherspoon in Chicago – with his opponent stepping in as a late replacement following Tyrone Spang testing positive for a banned substance.

Usyk's performance was nothing short of dominant, prompting Witherspoon's corner to retire him at the end of the seventh round.

A subsequent unanimous decision over Derek Chisora at the SSE Arena in London, stripping the experienced veteran of his WBO Inter-Continental heavyweight title, set up a thrilling title bout against unified champion Anthony Joshua.

Defying the odds against Joshua

Facing 'AJ' at the Tottenham Hotspur Stadium, Usyk entered the ring as the underdog at the state-of-the-art North London venue.

However, 'The Cat' demonstrated his immense boxing IQ in the squared circle – outclassing Joshua in a unanimous decision victory, which could have ended sooner as Usyk had 'AJ' against the ropes late on.

The much-anticipated rematch was delayed slightly as Usyk joined the war efforts in Ukraine. But it was finally arranged to take place in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, in August 2022.

Billed as 'Rage on the Red Sea', Joshua showcased stark improvement. However, it wasn't enough as Usyk secured a split decision win to maintain his undefeated record.

Controversial victory over Dubois

In a recent title defence against Briton Daniel Dubois in Warsaw, Poland, controversy arose when 'Triple D' appeared to knock Usyk to the canvas in the fifth round – only for the referee to rule the punch a low blow, which allowed the Ukrainian over three minutes to recover.

When the fight restarted, Usyk showcased his resilience – ultimately forcing Dubois to take a knee in the eighth round and again in the ninth, which spelled the end of the fight.

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Usyk's journey to the 'Ring of Fire' has been marked by resilience, adaptability, and a display of unparalleled boxing skill.

From his seamless transition to heavyweight to his victories over seasoned opponents, Usyk has defied sceptics at every turn.

As he aims to unify the heavyweight division against Tyson

Fury, Usyk stands on the cusp of boxing greatness – ready to etch his name in the annals of history as the undisputed heavyweight champion of the world.